



100 Texas State Parks Centennial Plan

TEXAS
PARKS &
WILDLIFE



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Look deep into nature and you will understand everything better. — Albert Einstein

Texas is a land abundant in heritage, landscapes, wildlife and culture. The words of the famous physicist remind us of the importance of what we steward in the Texas state park system - some of the state's most treasured natural, cultural and historic landmarks. Protecting the essence of Texas' natural and cultural heritage is not only a tribute to the past, but a responsibility for the future. The conservation of resources is also a wise economic decision, as this investment generates financial returns by making the state an attractive location for work and play.

Texas' system of state parks, natural areas and historic sites are special places where current and future generations have an opportunity to experience restorative recreation, feel the power of the natural world and to learn of our rich culture and history. A visitor's experiences can be transformative, educational and inspiring.

In 2023, Texas State Parks will celebrate its centennial anniversary. This Centennial Plan is a strategic framework for the management and development of our state park system leading up to the celebration of its first 100 years, as well as a thoughtful course for achieving a standard of excellence Texans can be proud of in the next century.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 1923, the 38th Texas Legislature established the Texas State Parks Board to provide unified management and direction for a variety of properties owned by the state and designated as “State Parks”. The legislation also envisioned an expansion of the park system in order to preserve other sites of significant beauty and historical value and make them available for visitation by the growing population of the state. This legislation established a path for the first one hundred years of park system development and millions of memorable visitor experiences.

Over nine decades later, during the 84th Legislature of 2015 a bi-partisan effort by Representatives Ryan Guillen and Lyle Larson and guided by Speaker Joe Straus moved legislation providing dedicated funding for state parks through the House. At the same time, Senator Craig Estes carried companion legislation through the Senate with the support of Lt. Governor Dan Patrick. When signed by Governor Greg Abbott, HB158 opened the way for the most significant opportunity of the last 40 years to improve and steward the resources of the Texas state park system and ensure this highly valued public service continues to meet the growing needs of our state’s residents and visitors. This legislation, effective September 1, 2015, statutorily designates 94% of proceeds from the “Sporting Goods Sales Tax” (SGST) to be credited to Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, as was originally intended in the passage of the SGST in 1993, as a primary funding stream for our state park system, and to help fund the acquisition and development of local parks.

The investment into the Texas state park system enabled by HB158 could not come at a more critical time. While highly valued by our state’s residents and visitors, our state parks, natural areas and historic sites are challenged by heavy visitation, resource impacts, natural disasters, and aging infrastructure. Today, our extensive state park system consists of 95 parks, natural areas, and historic sites located throughout the entire state of Texas, and hosts over eight-million visitors every year. Texans have consistently advocated and expressed their support for investing in our state parks at the polls and in public surveys and there is now a financial commitment in accordance with that support.



In 2023, Texas will celebrate the 100th anniversary of its park system as a state that is rapidly growing in population, is ethnically diverse and faced with environmental challenges. These facts will shape the future of the park system and outdoor recreation use for future generations. This Centennial Plan sets forth the actions to be pursued by the department by the year 2023 to ensure our state parks, natural areas, and historic sites achieve the high quality of structural integrity, resource stewardship, and public service desired by Texas citizens as the system reaches its 100th anniversary. With this foundation prepared, the system can

begin to implement the vision for its second century. Six broad imperatives have been identified that will need to be addressed to ensure the viability and relevance of the park system as it completes its first century.

The dedicated funding source established by HB158 provides the opportunity; this Centennial Plan provides direction for the state park system as it completes its first 100 years and begins its second century.

Six broad imperatives have been identified that will need to be addressed to ensure the viability and relevance of the park system as it completes its first century:

- 1. INVEST** in park facilities, infrastructure and park staff to ensure high quality customer service and facilities.
- 2. INCREASE AWARENESS** of opportunities for recreation and education among all Texans, and provide adequate numbers of parks within a reasonable travel distance for all citizens.
- 3. PURSUE PARTNERSHIPS** with private sector interests, nonprofits and other government agencies to improve park facilities and services, increase efficiency and increase public participation in outdoor recreation.
- 4. STRENGTHEN STEWARDSHIP:** Enhance management capabilities for the natural and cultural resources that are the essence of state parks to protect these attributes in a changing world.
- 5. MODERNIZE** business systems and practices to ensure parks are operated efficiently and can creatively respond to opportunities.
- 6. PURSUE OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE:** undertake strategic decisions necessary to guide the system on a path to operational excellence through the implementation of performance standards, best business practices, and continual review and assessment of the system inventory.

INTRODUCTION

The goal of this Centennial Plan for Texas State Parks is to create a strategic framework detailing the management and investment strategies the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department must undertake over the next seven years to become a high quality state park system as defined in previous and related studies. This will include a thoughtful allocation of investments in park operations, minor repair and preventative maintenance, major capital repair and replacement, enhancing visitor experiences with new and modern amenities, and acquiring/developing new state parks to meet increasing demand.



Historic and Recent Milestones of Texas State Parks

While there were state lands labeled as “state parks” prior to 1923, it was in this year that the State Parks Board was established by the Texas legislature. Since that time, our state park system has grown and developed to become one of the most extensive in the United States. Below is a timeline of milestones of the Texas State Parks system.

1923

Texas Legislature establishes State Parks Board at the urging of Governor Pat Neff.

1933-1940

Civilian Conservation Corps builds facilities at 29 sites that are now state parks.

1963

Governor John Connally oversees the merger of Texas Game and Fish Commission with State Parks Board to become the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD).

1963

Texas Tech University produces the first plan for Texas State Parks, providing guidance for future park system development.

1964

Creation of TPWD and an increased budget for state parks allows for immediate improvements in facilities and services including multiple fishing piers, shelters, restrooms, water tanks, and picnic areas.

1967

Texas legislature approves an unprecedented bond issue for parks, providing \$75 million to buy land for park acquisition and development.

1970

Twenty-six new parks were acquired and developed during the 1970's to keep pace with that growth.

1971

First dedicated funding for state park operations is implemented by the Texas Legislature

1979

The Texas Recreation and Parks Account is established to provide funding for grants to cities and towns to develop municipal parks.

1980

Texas' population has grown by more than three million, to more than 14.2 million from 11.2 million



1981

TPWD acquires 24,000 acres in the Franklin Mountains in El Paso County, creating the largest urban wilderness park in the United States at that time.

1988

TPW Commission authorizes purchase of the 215,000-acre Big Bend Ranch in Brewster and Presidio Counties for \$8.8 million. It is the largest tract ever acquired by TPWD, and doubles the acreage of state park holdings.

1993

Legislature passes HB706, a pivotal park funding bill switching the revenue source for state and local parks from the declining state cigarette tax to a draw from the general sales tax attributable to sporting goods (SGST), capping the amount of funding for parks at \$32 million per biennium.

The first parcel of Government Canyon State Natural Area near San Antonio is acquired, setting a new model for multi-partner land acquisition to protect water quality and critical habitat as well as provide outdoor recreation.

1996

The Cooperative Outdoor Outreach Program, established by the 74th Legislature, awards funding to nonprofit and government entities to provide outdoor recreation experiences to underserved populations.

2001

Texas voters approve Proposition 8, an \$850 million bond package that includes the largest bond issue in TPWD history,

up to \$100 million for repairs and improvements at state parks, wildlife management areas and fish hatcheries.

2007

Legislature lifts the cap on SGST revenues that can be appropriated to TPWD. Texas voters approve Proposition 4, which includes \$27 million for major repairs at state parks across the state and \$25 million for long-term preservation of the Battleship Texas.



2008

The Texas Outdoor Family Program kicks off to foster increased participation by urban families in outdoor recreation, particularly camping.

2010

Private donations make possible acquisition of the approximately 18,000-acre Devils River Ranch to create a new unit of Devils River State Natural Area; now known as the Dan A. Hughes Unit.

2011

More than 3,300 acres of ranch land is purchased in Palo Pinto County to create a new state park near Dallas-Fort Worth. Proceeds from the sale of Eagle Mountain Lake State Park near Fort Worth are used for the purchase, fulfilling a promise to use the sale proceeds to create a park near the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex.

TPWD receives a donation of more than 3,800 acres from the estate of Albert and Bessie Kronkosky to establish the Kronkosky State Natural Area.

2013

State Park Ambassador program launches, engaging diverse young adults as outreach volunteers inspiring their peers, producing park concerts, videos, and more to reach a connected generation.

2015

Texas Legislature passes HB158, statutorily dedicating the annual proceeds generated by the "Sporting Goods Sales Tax" to support the operational needs of Texas State Parks as was originally intended in HB706 passed in 1993, and to enhance the support of local park system development.

A SYSTEM OF PARKS

Local, state, and national park systems represent different points on a spectrum of conservation and outdoor recreation. Together these systems operate as a system of parks, providing a variety of experiences for users.



For many Texans, particularly those in urban areas, local parks provide their initial outdoor experiences beyond their own yard or an apartment courtyard. The open spaces of these sites are easily accessible and even small “pocket parks” can allow users to enjoy the outdoors. Larger urban parks may contain representative examples of the natural environment and offer initial outdoor experiences such as short hikes, fishing and nature watching. National Parks preserve large expanses of land and conserve natural resources on a landscape scale, often covering hundreds of square miles. By their very nature, these sites are often remote and not readily accessible for those with limited time or financial resources. Bridging the gap between local and national park systems, state

parks provide an opportunity for users to see samples of the natural environment and historical landmarks within a short distance of home. Together, these systems provide direct health, environmental and economic benefits for all citizens.

It is not a coincidence that the 100th anniversary of the Texas state park system follows soon after the 2016 celebration of the centennial of the National Park Service (NPS), as the ties between them are deep and longstanding. As the recognition of the need for public parks grew in the early 20th century, it quickly became clear that the federal government could not provide for the recreation needs of all citizens, nor preserve the thousands of scenic vistas and historic places across the country. Sites such as Palo Duro Canyon, which had been suggested for recognition as a national park, became some of the first state parks, as legislatures across the country worked to provide the benefits of parks to their citizens.

Partnerships between the NPS, state and local governments began in earnest in the 1930's. NPS planners and architects designed and supervised the construction of new state parks by members of the Civilian Conservation Corps, on lands provided by state and local government. The iconic parks created during this period of national investment remain the backbone of the state park system to this day.

Today, the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund administered by the NPS assists with funding for the development of numerous state and local parks. On the state level, the Texas Recreation and Parks Account administered by TPWD rewards innovation and excellence in the development of local parks through a competitive grant program providing financial assistance and technical guidance.

Case Study: The El Camino Real Project



A current example of the partnership between local, state and national park systems is found in the El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail interpretive project. This historic route dating to the late 1600s, departed from Monclova, Mexico and extended across Texas to Natchitoches, Louisiana. It served as a lifeline for East Texas missions by enabling the transport of freight supplies and military protection, and it

facilitated trade. During the eighteenth century Spanish ranchers conducted cattle drives along the route from points in Texas to the annual fair in Saltillo, Coahuila. In addition to being an avenue of commerce, the road enabled immigration. Moses Austin traversed the trail en route to San Antonio in 1820, and many Anglo-American colonists followed the trail from Nacogdoches to the interior of Texas.

El Camino Real projects in state parks will construct a new visitor center at Mission Tejas State Park in Houston County west of Nacogdoches, renovate the flood-damaged Smith Visitor Center at McKinney Falls State Park in Austin, repurpose a historic building into a new welcoming center at Goliad State Park and Historic Site, and place a new Camino Real interpretive display at Mission Rosario near Goliad.



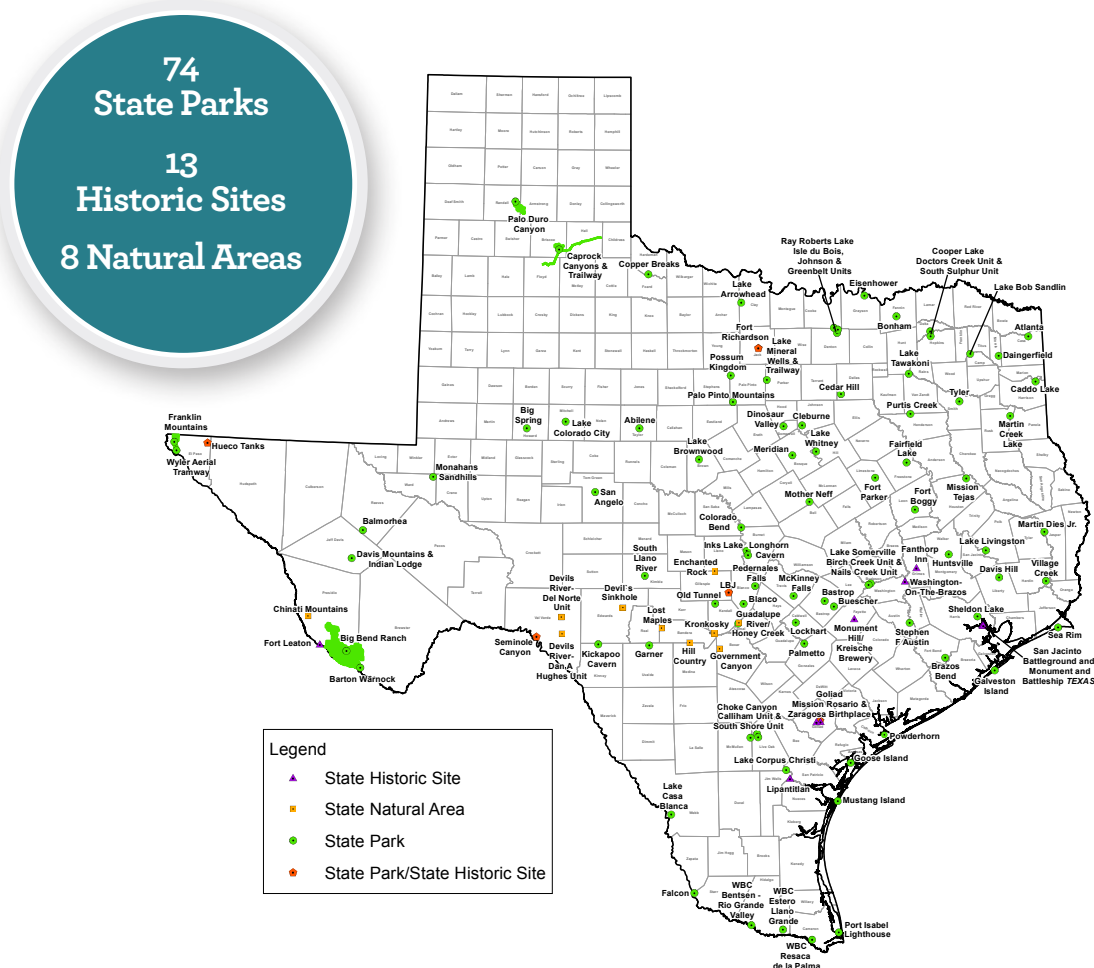
WHERE WE ARE TODAY

System Snapshot

The second century of state parks dawns on a system with an unparalleled collection of properties that contain some of the best representations of the natural systems of Texas, from the mountains of the Trans-Pecos region to Gulf beaches. The stories of the state's citizens from prehistory to the modern era are told in these sites, and millions of families have enriched their lives enjoying the recreational opportunities at state parks. At the same time a growing state population, habitat fragmentation and loss are making parks islands of the natural world in a highly altered landscape, requiring ever more active resource management to maintain these natural communities. The increasing ethnic diversity of the state's population also requires active engagement by park staff to interest new users and maintain current customers.

The park system also faces a significant backlog of needs stemming from years of deferred maintenance as the department struggled to simply keep parks open to the public during periods of lean funding. With much of the park system infrastructure reaching or exceeding its expected lifespan, significant investment in repairs and replacement of water, wastewater and electrical systems is necessary.

The Texas state park system presently consists of 95 sites, covering more than 627,000 acres and comprised of 74 state parks, 13 historic sites and 8 natural areas. In the period of 2010 through 2016, visitation to state parks climbed more than 15%, from less than 7.5 million to more than 8.8 million visitors annually.



The State Park Workforce

State parks are staffed by more than 1,300 dedicated employees. This professional staff includes Park Police Officers, Cultural and Natural Resource Specialists, Business Analysts, Maintenance Technicians, Customer Service staff and many other positions that are necessary to operate a park system that hosts visitors 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, often in remote locations. These employees are supplemented by an enthusiastic corps of volunteers that contribute labor equal to more than 20% of the paid workforce hours.

In FY16, the State Park Police force began implementation of a reorganization that recognizes the ever increasing training and professional development requirements on law enforcement officers. The use of “dual-role” officers will be eliminated over the coming years, and a direct command structure will ensure greater accountability.

Growing Popularity

The number of visitors to state parks has risen to record levels, reflecting the growth of the state's population and continuing desire to experience natural settings, to see the sites where the history of Texas was forged and recreate in the outdoors with friends and family.

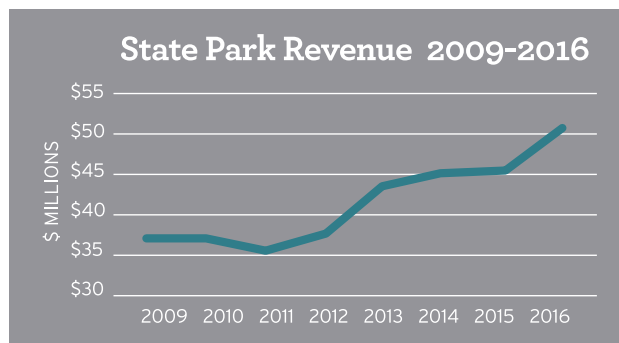
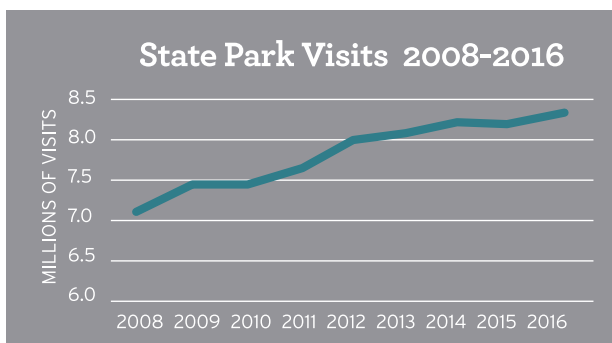
Concurrently, park system revenue has grown and surpassed \$50 million in FY16. The entrance and facility fees paid by park users continue to play a significant role in financing the operation and maintenance of parks and cost recovery opportunities continue to be a factor in park investment decisions. At the same time, increased revenue also comes with increased costs for the utilities, staffing and increased maintenance made necessary by a growing customer base.

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Reaching Capacity

In recent years parks have increasingly been faced with the prospect of reaching visitation capacity. Several sites, including Enchanted Rock, Garner, Balmorhea and Hueco Tanks have been forced to limit the number of park visitors in order to preserve park resources and maintain an enjoyable experience for visitors. Currently, capacity limits are typically based on physical limits such as the number of available vehicle parking spaces, but in the future additional science-based factors will be included in these calculations. Enforcing visitation limits will inherently limit the ability of sites to generate revenue, but will be necessary to ensure the long term preservation of park resources.

As the population of the state continues to grow, it is likely that park closures due to excessive numbers of visitors will become more common. The addition of new parks to the system and the expansion of existing parks will be necessary to enable the agency to meet the demands of the public for outdoor recreation venues, particularly in locations within a short drive time of urban population centers.



THE VALUE OF STATE PARKS IN A GROWING TEXAS

With over 95% of Texas lands in private ownership, Texas state parks provide some of the only access to large open spaces for many citizens. As the population of Texas grows, and land ownership is more and more fragmented, state parks have increasingly become ecological islands that serve to preserve examples of the natural landscape. As our state population soars to an estimated 54 million residents in 2050, it is becoming increasingly urbanized and often disconnected from the natural world. State parks serve a unique role of providing access to the natural world that is not normally found in city park systems, and is more readily accessible than units of the national park system.

Today, approximately 85% of Texans live in major urban areas and that proportion is expected to rise as our population grows. The population will be larger, more urban and have greater ethnic diversity than today. The population will be increasingly concentrated in the El Paso and Rio Grande Valley areas, and especially in the mega-region between Dallas-Fort Worth, San Antonio and Houston. This region is projected to grow in population by 93% over the next three decades, where Houston and Dallas-Fort Worth will account for nearly half of the state's total residents. Rural land ownership is likely to continue to become more fragmented with large parcels of the historic landscape becoming increasingly rare. As such, Texans as a whole will have less exposure to the natural world.

While the demographics and total population of our state are changing dramatically, the conservation mission of the state park system will not change and will be ever more important. The natural ecosystems preserved in parks will become more uncommon, and will be the only access to the natural world for the vast majority of Texans. The system faces two related challenges: the need to preserve large tracts within a reasonable distance of population centers, while such tracts become increasingly rare and more expensive.



Economic Impacts

Aside from the protection of our most treasured natural, cultural and historic resources, and the preservation of opportunity for current and future Texans to be able to access our native landscapes, state parks provide tremendous value as an economic engine for local communities. There are few state agencies that can boast the innovation and wide-spread economic impact that is produced by the work of the Texas state park system. Based on the last economic impact study completed in 2014 by Crompton and Yeong of Texas A&M University, this public service generates over \$774 million annually in local and statewide economic impact, generating over \$200 million in personal household income for Texas residents, and supporting over 5,871 jobs throughout the state.

Public Health Benefits

Our connections with our native landscapes and wildlife help us lead healthier lifestyles and are part of our identity as Texans. According to the Center for Disease Control, parks can affect a range of public health issues, including injuries, mental health, and pollution exposures. Having readily accessible parks can encourage physical activity with attendant health benefits. Contact with nature has a demonstrated positive impact on both physical and mental health and well-being, and contact with green spaces has been linked with improved focus in children, lower stress, lower blood pressure, and faster recovery from illness. Coupled with the tangible ecosystem services they provide, natural areas present a means of improving public health and quality of life for our Texas residents.



The year 2023 will be the 100th anniversary of Texas State Parks. Continuing to invest in our state parks as a public service while they serve increasingly diverse populations and recreational interests, while protecting our natural and cultural heritage is the responsible action we must take today to ensure these benefits for our future.

¹ Crompton, John and Ji youn Jeong. "The Economic Contributions of Texas State Parks," Department of Recreation, Park, and Tourism Sciences, Texas A&M University; Commissioned by Texas Coalition for Conservation, November 2014.

THE IMPACT OF SUSTAINED FUNDING

The dedication of sporting goods sales tax revenues to the state park system provides opportunities to address systemic challenges in a strategic manner. To do so, it is also necessary to look beyond the normal two year funding cycle of the past to a longer funding horizon. Efforts will be needed on multiple fronts to meet the expectations of current users, encourage new visitors, conserve park resources and address the needs of a growing and dynamic state.

Future Challenges

As the park system looks to its second century, it is necessary for the leadership to recognize the very real challenges that face it. Addressing these challenges will require a willingness to adapt to new conditions and may require the adoption of new ways of doing business.

There are numerous immediate needs to address site, facility and infrastructure conditions that threaten the business continuity of the state park system. Additionally, there are resource stewardship and facility repair needs resulting from recent natural disasters and environmental events including flooding, fires, drought, and severe storms. Finally, there is the imperative to modernize our state park system and enhance its ability to serve our visitors with high quality experiences. These investments must be balanced with on-going operational needs facing the system every day. In addition, TPWD must provide new facilities and complete park development projects that will provide for an increasing number of users in the future. With a balanced investment strategy, the sustained funding provided by dedication of sporting goods sales tax and revenue generated from park users will provide the resources necessary to accomplish these tasks.

Predicting the Unpredictable



While individual events are unpredictable, extraordinary impacts to parks occur on a regular basis and must be anticipated. The facilities and infrastructure of the state park system are threatened each year by impacts that are both predictable (normal wear from use) and unpredictable (weather and other forces of nature). Besides the standard repair and asset replacement that must be addressed by deterioration from age and increased usage, state park infrastructure is impacted by floods, wildfires, hurricanes, drought and other environmental impacts that cause significant damage to facilities. In Fiscal Years 2015 and 2016 alone, flooding in parks has caused facility damages estimated to exceed \$40,000,000. Responding to these natural disasters requires flexibility in capital budget allocations, as well as a responsibility to rebuild facilities in a more sustainable manner.

This constant onslaught of damaging influences on the facilities and infrastructure of the state park system further challenges the ability of Texas state parks to maintain operations, meet visitor demands, and to sustain a high quality state park system. The Texas state park system must explore options to minimize the impacts of catastrophic events to the system.

Use of State Parks and Historic Sites

The residents of Texas are rapidly diversifying, as well their recreational interests and preferred uses of Texas state parks and historic sites. These changes place significant challenges on the state park system to meet current user demands and yet remain a relevant and accessible system of public assets that responsibly serves the needs of all Texas residents.

A recent survey of more than 1,500 current park users conducted in May 2016 indicated a majority of users are over the age of 45 years and self-identify as White/Anglo. The results of this survey bring to light the usage preferences and quality ratings of current state park and historic site users, but do not capture the interests and preferences of current non-users of the Texas State Park System. Further study and evaluation of unmet needs of younger and more diverse audiences is required to guide the development of future programs and amenities. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department is committed to a robust and ongoing strategic initiative to address the diversified needs of current and future Texas residents in the development and management of the state park system.

Results from this survey of park users, which are repeat visitors to state parks and historic sites, indicate the following highest quality ratings from pass holders (in rank order):

1. **Responsible care of natural/cultural/historic resources**
2. **Quality of customer service**
3. **Location within a reasonable distance from home**
4. **Quality of recreation opportunities**
5. **Quality of facilities and amenities**

Results from this same survey show the highest preferences for development priorities are the following (in rank order):

1. **Improved restrooms**
2. **Additional trails in parks**
3. **More interpretive/education programs**
4. **More canoe/kayaking opportunities in parks**
5. **Campground upgrades**
6. **Improved customer service**
7. **Modernization of park amenities**
8. **Additional parks in close proximity to urban areas**
9. **More automated self-pay entry stations**
10. **Improvements to cabins and screened shelters**

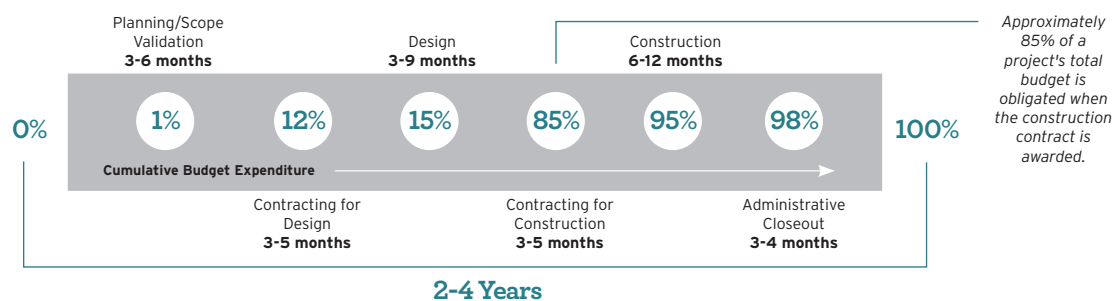
Not reflected in these survey results are the interests and preferences of current non-users of state parks and historic sites. In order to develop a state park system that is accessible and appealing to the growing diversity of the Texas population, further analysis is needed to identify the intersection of public need with the opportunities available at these public sites.

TPWD is committed to addressing the diverse needs of current and future Texas residents in the development and management of the state park system.

BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

The additional funds provided by the dedication of Sporting Goods Sales Tax (SGST) receipts presents a short term challenge while enabling the department to address the future in a more rational and business-like manner. Prior to the current biennium, most capital projects utilized funding from bonds. Bond funds are available for five years after appropriation, and have no encumbrance constraints, but have significant drawbacks. This process was systemic of the lack of sustainable funding and the inability to look beyond a two year budget cycle.

The use of bond funding in the past required the agency to develop a list of projects for submission in the appropriations request process that would set expectations about deliverables and cost estimates before the project costs were able to be fully researched and understood, resulting in project budget shortfalls and inefficient work scheduling. The use of bond funding also meant that the agency would hold millions of dollars in projects on the books without the ability to actually commit the construction funds for several years. From a project management standpoint, it also meant that many undertakings would be in the same process phase, i.e. design or contracting, in unison. Because resources were linked to a particular project, there was a constant imbalance between available staff resources and project workloads, drawing comparisons to a snake eating and digesting a large meal.



A More Efficient Approach

Although there will be a challenging transition, there are many advantages to a more "pay as you go" model that will use SGST funding. Unlike bonds, these funds are expected to be obligated within the biennium of appropriation. The timeline of the project delivery process is still the same, but the funds will be allocated according to the program phases occurring within the biennium. This will allow management to better plan for the future and match resources to ongoing needs.

In the short term, this has resulted in a compression of project schedules as staff works to transition from a five year project delivery system to a new model of integrated facility development and management model that will sustain the infrastructure of the park system into the future.

Addressing Priorities

As the resources provided by dedicated funding are utilized by the system, park leadership has established priorities for needs that will be addressed. In addition to addressing the impacts from recent natural disasters much of the available funding in the near future will be used for projects that will repair the impacts of deferred maintenance that have accumulated over past decades. Additional efforts will focus on repairs to critical park infrastructure, those facilities such as water and wastewater treatment systems that are unseen but are critical to public use of parks.

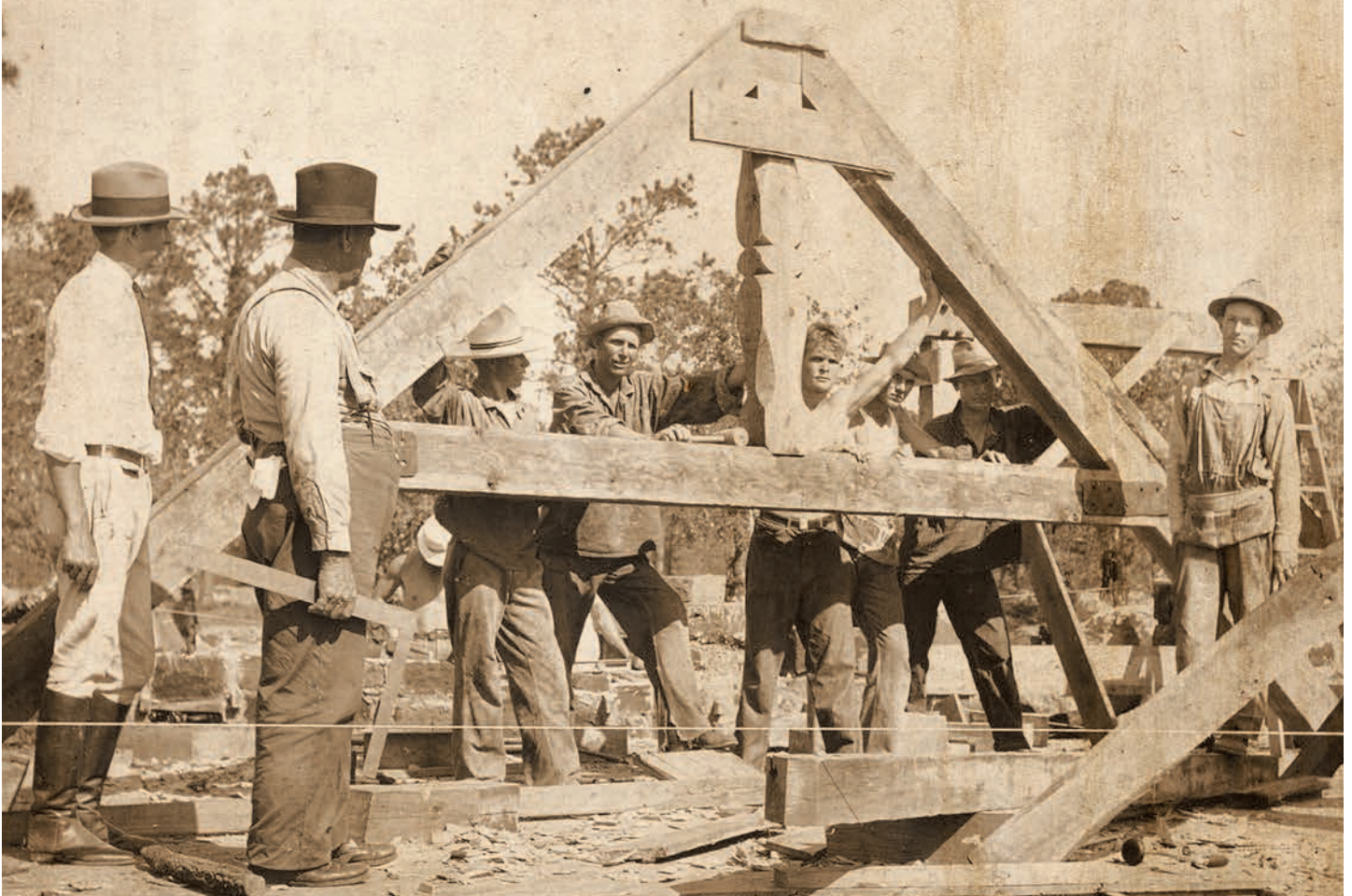
Projects currently under construction include replacement of the water system at Big Bend Ranch, repairs to facilities at Big Spring, replacement of the wastewater treatment plant at Garner and repairs to the Lake Raven dam at Huntsville. Repairs to water and wastewater systems are also underway at Lake Brownwood, Martin Creek Lake, Possum Kingdom, Galveston Island and the San Jacinto Battleground. In addition, new cabins have been added at Fort Boggy, as well as a new camping loop at Palo Duro Canyon, and a completely remodeled CCC-era group use facility at Lockhart.

As critical repair issues are completed, park users will begin to see more noticeable projects. Planning and design has been initiated on visitor facilities across the state such as new visitor centers at Franklin Mountains, Mission Tejas and Tyler, renovations to the historic Balmorehea motor courts and the flood damaged visitor center at McKinney Falls. New restroom facilities are also in the queue at Garner, Caddo Lake, Colorado Bend, Government Canyon, Guadalupe River, Inks Lake, and Mustang Island.

These projects, along with many other repairs, upgrades and renovations across the state will bring the Texas park system up to a standard that the citizens of the state deserve.

100 Completing the First Century:

LAYING THE FOUNDATION FOR
THE NEXT 100 YEARS



As inspectors tour the work site at Bastrop State Park, these CCC men display their decorated interior truss for the refectory, April 3, 1934.

LAYING THE FOUNDATION FOR THE FUTURE

Answering the charge issued by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission and the requests of members of the Texas State Legislature, this plan outlines the necessary steps to ensure the State's investment in the state park system as authorized in HB158 meets public expectations and represents thoughtful investment of these public resources.

The Texas State Park System safeguards and stewards some of the greatest treasures of our natural and cultural history, and provides the opportunity for generations today and in the future to experience the wonders of the Lone Star State. This plan establishes a framework for the state park system to proactively manage and improve the park system as it enters its second century. We will continue to encounter new challenges that must be addressed from heavy use, population growth and demographic changes, weather and environmental events. The steps presented will ensure the Texas state park system continues to be a significant economic benefit to local communities in the future, and remains something Texans today and in the future can remain proud of.

Imperatives for the Centennial and Beyond

Six areas of action are identified below as **Imperatives** - that is, actions that are necessary to ensure our state parks, natural areas and historic sites are a high-quality system in their structural integrity, resource stewardship and in the excellence of how this system serves the public. Each of these imperatives contains several component strategies that will need to be implemented in order to meet the critical needs of the system and the expectations of the citizens of our state.

INVEST in park facilities, infrastructure and park staff to ensure high-quality customer service and facilities.

INCREASE AWARENESS of opportunities for recreation and education among all Texans, and provide adequate numbers of parks within a reasonable travel distance for all citizens.

PURSUE PARTNERSHIPS with private sector interests, nonprofits and other government agencies to improve park facilities and services, increase efficiency and increase public participation in outdoor recreation.

STRENGTHEN STEWARDSHIP: Enhance management capabilities for the natural and cultural resources that are the essence of state parks to protect these attributes in a changing world.

MODERNIZE business systems and practices to ensure parks are operated efficiently and can creatively respond to opportunities.

PURSUE EXCELLENCE: Undertake strategic decisions to guide the system on a path to operational excellence through the implementation of performance standards, best business practices, and continual review and assessment of the system inventory.

Centennial Actions

In order to achieve a high-quality park system for Texas by 2023, achievable and concrete steps must continue to be taken. The following initiatives identified will guide the operations, management and development of Texas state parks, historic sites, and natural areas leading up to the centennial anniversary. Implementation of these plans is dependent on continued dedication of Sporting Goods Sales Tax proceeds to provide the financial resources required.

The Centennial Plan outlines the strategies and priorities of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for ensuring our state parks, natural areas, and historic sites are a high quality system in their structural integrity, resource stewardship, and in the excellence of how this system serves the public.

INVESTMENT

Invest in park facilities, infrastructure and park staff to ensure high-quality customer service and facilities.

The primary impact from the dedication of sporting goods sales taxes will be the ability for the park system to approach its development and repair needs in a rational and sustained manner. Over the next seven years, a balanced approach to the investment of capital funds will address three primary needs. Funding will be allocated to facility and infrastructure repair and replacement, facility and amenity developments at unopened parks, and new business and visitor service capabilities. At the same time, the system must invest in the park workforce to ensure public safety is maintained, park resources are properly managed and quality customer service is continued.



INVESTMENT

STRATEGIC ACTIONS:

Initiate development of five new state parks.

There are currently five undeveloped park sites waiting that are not available for public use. Opening the sites for public use is dependent on the construction of the infrastructure required to accommodate public use. The department plans to develop these sites according to the following schedule:

Palo Pinto Mountains: Funding was provided by the 84th Legislature for Architectural and Engineering costs. Construction will begin in the FY18-19 Biennium and is estimated to be completed by 2021.

Albert and Bessie Kronkosky: Facility planning and design will be conducted during the FY18-19 biennium, with construction commencing in the FY20-21 biennium.

Chinati Mountains: TPWD recently acquired a final land parcel that will provide a public access route into the SNA. A previously prepared site Master Plan is being updated. Development will be limited, but existing cabins and limited water system will require renovations and upgrades to be undertaken in the FY20-21 biennium. Public access will also be dependent on TxDOT support for road construction.

Davis Hill: Development of a Public Use Plan for the site will be initiated in FY17, which will provide the framework for the development of cost estimates at a later date.

Powderhorn: TPWD will accept donation of the property in 2017. Initial planning and assessments are underway. Facility development is anticipated to begin in the FY20-21 biennium.

Address impacts from natural disasters.

Flood events in 2015 and 2016 have resulted in substantial impacts to park facilities. Major repair projects to address this damage are needed at Bastrop, Cedar Hill, Lake Somerville, Lake Whitney, Mother Neff, Ray Roberts Lake and Stephen F. Austin State Parks. These damage repairs are not included in the project list that follows.

Invest in the State Park workforce.

While basic maintenance and cleaning will always be a necessity, overall State Park operations have become increasingly complex and sophisticated requiring a workforce that is more highly educated and skilled. TPWD salaries and wages are consistently lower than other Texas natural resource agencies and public employers of similar positions - an issue that is regularly cited by employees as a major dissatisfaction with their jobs and reason for leaving as expressed in exit interviews. Additionally, the apportionment of staffing at each state park site and in the system overall will be evaluated and adjusted as needed to ensure the agency is properly resourcing the following key areas of operations and service delivery:

Public safety

Program delivery and outreach

Site and facility maintenance

Resource stewardship

Business support and administration

Undertake needed major repair and maintenance projects and complete facility development projects.

The backlog of deferred maintenance and repair projects in state parks has been well documented and is being addressed with the projects below. This project list is subject to reprioritization in the event of major disasters or other unplanned circumstances.

PARK	2016 & 2017 Biennium	2018 & 2019 Biennium	2020 & 2021 Biennium
Abilene		Planning and design for demolition and reconstruction of park swimming pool in current location, including all pool plumbing and mechanical systems. Project design will include complete rehabilitation of the historic CCC Bathhouse/Concession building to address health, environmental and accessibility issues with the historic building and include construction of a new bathhouse.	Initiate pool demolition and reconstruction. Begin work on rehabilitation of historic Bathhouse/Concession building.
Balmorhea	Design and initiate construction of renovations to the historic San Solomon Springs Courts, including repairs room interiors and exterior structure. Upgrade camping loop electrical service and renovate campground restroom.	Continue work on renovations to the Court units, camping loop electrical service and renovation of campground restroom. Begin planning and design work to address visitor safety and customer service issues caused by existing park layout, by relocating the park entry and replacing the inadequate park headquarters.	Initiate construction of renovations to park layout and facility improvements.
Bastrop	Renovate the Group Barracks complex. Survey park boundaries and replace boundary fences. Continue reforestation and resource management activities. Implement lake bank stabilization and erosion controls for Cabins #1 and 12. Begin planning and design for reconstruction of dam.	Construction and administration of the lake dam reconstruction project.	
Big Bend Ranch	Replace the public water system servicing the Saucedo Headquarters complex, including the Visitor Center, park lodging facilities and staff residences.	Initiate planning, design and construction of renovations to the interior, exterior and utilities for the historic Saucedo Ranch house. Implement repairs to staff residences. Replace roof of the Armstrong Visitor Center and enclose attached maintenance bays. Initiate renovations to the Saucedo bunkhouse.	Renovate historic Saucedo Ranch house, including interior and exterior repairs and utility upgrades.

INVESTMENT

PARK	2016 & 2017 Biennium	2018 & 2019 Biennium	2020 & 2021 Biennium
Big Spring	<p>Repair historic Group Pavilion and install new wayside exhibits.</p> <p>Construct renovations to the CCC Headquarters building interior spaces and ADA entry.</p>		
Brazos Bend	Upgrade utilities in Red Buckeye camping loop and screened shelter area.		
Buescher	Reconstruct park boundary fence destroyed by wildfire.		
Caddo Lake	<p>Construction of replacement restroom facility.</p> <p>Reconstruct park roads and improve campsite pullouts.</p> <p>Plan and design water system upgrades.</p>	Construction of upgrades to water system, including new storage tanks, pump systems, electrical improvements and pump house.	
Cedar Hill	Construction and repairs to park facilities, including park entrance and reconstruction of Shady Ridge area roads and parking lots.	Plan, develop and install new exhibits for the historic Penn Farm area.	
Chinati Mountains	Develop a Public Use Plan to guide development of the donated State Natural Area land, including the general layout of the site and the type facilities to be built.	Undertake design work for facility development.	Initiate construction of public access road and facility development.
Colorado Bend	<p>Design and conduct repairs to four composting toilets.</p> <p>Initiate planning and design of replacement of existing water treatment plant.</p>	Replace park's water treatment plant with a new system to include a storage tank and ground water well.	
Copper Breaks	Begin planning and design of replacement of the park's existing water treatment and distribution system with a modernized and efficient system capable of saving water resources.	Construct new park water treatment and distribution system.	
Davis Mountains	Replace radio tower facility damaged by wildfire.		
Devils River	Replace septic systems for existing facilities. Initiate planning and design for visitor check-in facility and lodge building renovations.	Construct a visitor check-in facility and remodel existing lodge building.	Fully open Dan A. Hughes Unit for public use.
Dinosaur Valley			Design a replacement for the existing visitor center with a modern interpretive and educational center.

PARK	2016 & 2017 Biennium	2018 & 2019 Biennium	2020 & 2021 Biennium
Eisenhower	Construct facilities to serve All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) trail, including comfort station, pavilion and associated infrastructure.		
Fairfield Lake	Plan and design renovations to existing wastewater treatment plants.	Implement replacement of the mechanical systems at two existing wastewater treatment plants with modernized and efficient systems.	
Fort Boggy	Construct five cabin units and associated restroom facility. Design and construct replacement staff residence to replace mobile home currently in use.	Complete cabin and restroom construction.	
Fort Leaton	Plan and design roof replacement to preserve the historic structure and protect the building and contents from further water damage.	Replace the roof on historic fort structure.	
Fort Parker	Renovate the Group Barracks complex.		
Fort Richardson	Planning and design of replacement for existing, 50-year-old water distribution and wastewater system.	Construction of replacement water and wastewater system including the main lift station.	
Franklin Mountains	Plan, design and construct a Visitor's Center at Franklin Mountains SP with viewing gallery, interpretive exhibits, restrooms, gift shop, classroom and offices.	Complete Visitor Center construction.	
Galveston Island	Conduct repairs to historic buildings in park. Plan and design redevelopment of park beachside facilities destroyed by Hurricane Ike.	Construct beachside facilities to replace those destroyed by Hurricane Ike.	
Garner	Construct replacement wastewater treatment plant. Resurface park roads. Install lighting improvements around the CCC dance floor.	Develop construction documents for an upgrade to the park's overall water system, including treatment to reduce water hardness, and replace water distribution lines serving several park facilities.	Construct upgrades to park water system.
Goliad	Planning and design of park's wastewater system to replace obsolete clay wastewater lines and systems, lift station, septic tanks, and drain fields with a modern, efficient system.	Construction of replacement wastewater system for the site, including the Hacienda, Mission workshop, CCC Restroom, Old River Restroom, park headquarters, group dining hall, camp loop, and residence.	

INVESTMENT

PARK	2016 & 2017 Biennium	2018 & 2019 Biennium	2020 & 2021 Biennium
Goose Island	<p>Raise the public road serving the beach area and install 700' of seawall to protect the raised road profile.</p> <p>Develop Public Use Plan for additional park property.</p>		
Government Canyon	Planning and design of replacement restroom.	Construct restroom with accessible parking and associated site work.	
Guadalupe River	Planning and design of replacement restrooms.	Construct replacement restrooms.	
Hill Country	Upgrade water well serving the Group lodge.		
Hueco Tanks		Planning and design for replacement of the existing, undersized Visitor Center with an appropriately-sized facility.	Initiate construction of new Visitor Center with adequate space to meet customer service and business needs.
Huntsville	<p>Planning and design of CCC Boathouse and Lodge Patio wall repairs.</p> <p>Conduct repairs to Lake Raven dam and spillway.</p>	Renovate and repair historic boathouse structure and stabilize the Raven Lodge patio wall.	
Indian Lodge	Plan and design replacement of historic Indian Lodge HVAC system and repairs to the exterior plaster. Plan renovations for the Black Bear restaurant.	Renovate the historic Indian Lodge facility, including exterior plaster repairs and replacement of obsolete HVAC units with energy-efficient systems. Initiate renovations to Black Bear restaurant.	
Inks Lake	<p>Planning for replacement of existing undersized headquarters building including adequate registration area, staff offices and additional restrooms. Design traffic flow improvements around the headquarters site.</p> <p>Plan and design four replacement restrooms.</p>	<p>Prepare construction documents for replacement of current inadequate headquarters building and associated traffic improvements.</p> <p>Construct four replacement restrooms.</p>	Construct new park headquarters building to meet customer service and business needs.
Kronkosky	Develop a Public Use Plan to guide development of the donated Kronkosky State Natural Area land. This plan will determine the general layout of the site and the type of facilities to be built.	Prepare planning and design construction documents for the site to include installation of infrastructure including utilities, parking, roadways, restrooms and a fee collection booth.	Initiate construction of planned public use facilities for the site.

PARK	2016 & 2017 Biennium	2018 & 2019 Biennium	2020 & 2021 Biennium
Lake Livingston	Plan renovations to marina area and fishing pier, including repairs to restrooms, dock, fueling stations and lighting.	Commence renovation work on marina and fishing pier, including repairs to restrooms, dock, electrical systems. Construct fully accessible routes between facilities and parking lot.	
Lake Tawakoni	Conduct planning and design for replacement park residence.	Construct replacement for current mobile home staff residence with an appropriately sized, durable structure.	
Lockhart	Rehabilitate the deteriorating CCC Recreation Hall, including structural repairs to the roof, siding, flooring and cabinets.		
McKinney Falls	Renovate the Smith Visitor Center to repair damages and update exhibits.	Complete Smith Visitor Center renovations.	
Mission Tejas	Replace visitor center destroyed by fire.	Conclude construction of new visitor center.	
Monahans Sandhills	Review current visitor center exhibits to plan upgrades and replacements.	Construct and install new exhibits in the Dunagan Visitor Center. Conduct repairs to the historic Section House, including roof replacement.	
Monument Hill / Kreische Brewery	Planning and design of historic Kreische House and Brewery repairs and renovations.	Begin renovation of the interior and exterior of the historic Kreische House and Brewery; to include water damage repairs and renovation of the cedar shake roof, structural elements, woodwork, floors, windows, stone work, finishes, historic furniture, and water diversion landscaping to protect the structures.	
Mother Neff	Install improvements to park playground area.		
Mustang Island	Begin planning and design of replacement campground and day-use area restrooms. Conduct repairs to the foundations of two staff residences.	Construction of replacement camp loop and day-use restrooms with two modern facilities. Project will include shower and restroom accommodations, accessible parking routes, utility upgrades and connections.	

INVESTMENT

PARK	2016 & 2017 Biennium	2018 & 2019 Biennium	2020 & 2021 Biennium
Palo Duro Canyon	<p>Begin planning and design of replacement for existing park headquarters building.</p> <p>Complete cabin water supply utility upgrades. Complete improvements to water crossings at bridges #1, 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6, and repairs to Juniper camping loop. Replace roof at Canoncita facility.</p>	<p>Complete design and construction documents for replacement of park headquarters with an adequately-sized and modern facility.</p>	<p>Construct new headquarters building to meet customer service and business needs.</p>
Palo Pinto Mountains	<p>Develop construction documents for park facilities and infrastructure.</p>	<p>Initiate construction of park facilities and all necessary support infrastructure for a new state park.</p>	<p>Complete park development construction to make park ready for public use. Open park to the public when construction is complete.</p>
Pedernales Falls	<p>Planning and design of replacements for two undersized camping area restrooms and associated plumbing, mechanical and electrical systems with adequately-sized restrooms.</p> <p>Planning and design of water and wastewater system upgrades.</p>	<p>Construction of two replacement restrooms and associated plumbing, mechanical and electrical systems.</p> <p>Construct upgrades for the obsolete water treatment plant, including four septic fields, drain fields and water filtration system.</p>	
Port Isabel Lighthouse	<p>Repair roof leaks and replace railing on the watchroom and lantern levels. Repair windows, repair and repaint exterior plaster.</p>		
Possum Kingdom	<p>Replace water treatment plant and upgrade water supply utility system for the entire park.</p>		
Powderhorn Ranch	<p>Develop Public Use Plan to guide facility development planning for new park.</p>	<p>Develop designs and construction documents for park facility development.</p>	<p>Construct park facilities and necessary support infrastructure for a new state park.</p>
Ray Roberts Lake	<p>Conduct repairs to boat ramp facility and renovations to Lantana Lodge and Marina. Plan and design composting toilet replacements at Johnson Branch.</p>	<p>Construct modular vault toilets to replace seven obsolete compost toilets to serve several trail and camping areas.</p>	
San Jacinto Battleground	<p>Construct replacement bulkheads and adjoining sidewalks on Ship Channel.</p> <p>Repair Monument entry door and soffit. Plan and design residence replacements, water and fire line improvements.</p> <p>Develop preliminary engineering report for reflection pool upgrades.</p>	<p>Replace two substandard residences with new houses that will be located away from sensitive archaeological resources.</p>	<p>Repair San Jacinto Monument reflection pool.</p>

PARK	2016 & 2017 Biennium	2018 & 2019 Biennium	2020 & 2021 Biennium
Seminole Canyon	Planning and design of camping loop upgrades.	Construction of upgrades to the Desert Vista Camp Loop's utilities, including the sewage system, water well, storage tank, pumps, and accessible restroom upgrades.	
Sheldon Lake	Construct prairie and wetland boardwalks, bird-viewing platform, 15 developed campsites, trails, interpretive exhibits, plant grow-out areas and new park entrance sign.		
Statewide	<p>Planning and design of repairs to radio tower sites, towers and associated buildings at 35 sites across the state to ensure public safety.</p> <p>Planning and design of boat ramp repairs at locations across the state.</p>	<p>Continue repairs on 35 remotely-located, active TPWD radio tower sites, towers, and building structures supporting the radio equipment.</p> <p>Conduct repairs on boat ramps at multiple state park sites including accessibility upgrades, courtesy docks, piers and renovation of existing facilities.</p>	
Stephen F. Austin	<p>Planning and design of wastewater treatment plant upgrades.</p> <p>Plan repairs and prepare construction documents for repairs to park water storage tank.</p>	<p>Installation of wastewater treatment plant improvements.</p> <p>Pressure wash, coat, and paint elevated water storage tank.</p>	
Tyler	<p>Install replacement aerators in wastewater treatment plant. Design of replacement staff residences.</p> <p>Planning and design of replacement for undersized and obsolete park headquarters building.</p>	<p>Construction to replace two substandard staff residences with two adequately-sized, energy-efficient structures, including utility connections and parking.</p> <p>Construct new headquarters building to meet customer service and business needs.</p>	
Waco Office Building	Repair HVAC system and conduct mold remediation.	Planning and design of a replacement building for the current, undersized Regional Office building which houses business operations for four TPWD divisions.	Construct new office building to replace inadequate structure.

AWARENESS

Increase awareness of opportunities for recreation and education among all Texans.

Before the citizens of Texas can avail themselves of the benefits of the state park system, they must be aware of the opportunities that exist and feel welcome at these sites. TPWD has long been at the forefront of communication efforts within state government, utilizing television, radio and print media to promote parks and in recent years has expanded its use of social media. To continue to reach new audiences, the agency will actively seek to engage the state's diverse residents through multiple strategies.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS:

Develop and maintain an effective communications and outreach strategy with messaging that is culturally relevant to the broad audiences of Texas.

Parks will need to be creative in efforts to reach an increasingly diverse and urbanized audience of Texans. Strategies will include greater partnerships with urban park departments and schools, and a direct presence in urban areas will be needed to reach new users. Technology will play an increasing role in reaching these audiences with compelling messages that will interest and engage them.

Identify real and perceived barriers to park use by underserved populations.

In order to ensure parks serve all Texans, the department must research and address the reasons significant portions of citizens do not utilize state parks. A program of research to identify and remove these obstacles will be undertaken and efforts will be made to ensure parks are available and welcoming to all users.

Initiate planning for the celebration of the State Park System Centennial

The 100th anniversary of the creation of the park system provides a unique opportunity to raise awareness of these sites. Planning for this event will bring together TPWD staff and local communities as well as the private and nonprofit sectors to celebrate the birthday of the "crown jewels of Texas."



PARTNERSHIPS

Pursue partnerships with private sector interests, nonprofits and other government agencies to improve park facilities and services, increase efficiency and increase public participation in outdoor recreation.

From its inception, the state park system has utilized donations of land and other private philanthropic support to develop and improve parks. State parks also have a long relationship with private businesses that have operated retail stores, marinas, restaurants and other enterprises within parks. By working in concert with the private and nonprofit sectors as well as local and federal park systems and other state agencies, TPWD can increase participation in outdoor recreation and knowledge of our cultural heritage.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS:

Enhance partnerships with the private sector.

The state park system has a long history of working with private businesses through its concession program, which allows businesses to provide designated services in parks. Additional partnership opportunities may exist that would permit the investment of private capital for park facility development through innovative fee sharing or other contractual arrangements. The department will continue to pursue solutions to expand private sector partnerships in order to provide additional public services and facility development at the lowest possible cost.

Encourage the development of high quality local parks through technical assistance and financial incentives provided by a strong recreation grants program.

Dedication of sporting goods sales tax proceeds as authorized in HB158 provides a sustainable source of funding for local park grants as well. There is tremendous importance of local parks in meeting public recreational needs and demands, particularly given the dramatic population growth and urbanization Texas is experiencing.

Local parks have multiple avenues for funding, and these grants should remain an incentive and support for development, however, this grant program should not become the primary source of funding for development of local park systems.

TPWD will also continue to encourage participation in the outdoors by underserved populations through the Community Outdoor Outreach Program (CO-OP) grants program, which provides funding for nonprofits and local governments to directly engage new users in outdoor resource based recreation and conservation education.

PARTNERSHIPS

Further increase partnerships with the Parks and Wildlife Foundation and local nonprofit partners.

Many state parks, historic sites and natural areas have opportunities to enhance facility management practices, visitor services, or park operations through partnerships with private non-profit and for-profit entities. The business development policies and practices of Texas State Parks will be evaluated and refined in order to create more opportunities to improve TPWD's efficiency in park management, increase the appeal for private entities to work with TPWD, and to encourage additional financial investment through the Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation from private partners to add value to the state park system and its operations.

Case Study: Washington-on-the-Brazos

Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site, location of the signing of the Texas Declaration of Independence in 1836 has partnered with the nonprofit Washington-on-the-Brazos State Park Association since its inception in 1936. Formed during the Texas Centennial celebration, the Association has provided support to the site through financial contributions, promotional activities and program development.

In 2016 the department and this oldest of park nonprofit partners embarked on a new planning effort to identify needed facility developments, programming innovations and other improvements to the



"Birthplace of Texas" that will enhance the visitor experience. With a variety of historical resources including the home of Anson Jones and the associated Barrington Living History Farm as well as the recreated Independence Hall, a fresh approach to the site will provide a better understanding of the rich history of the site and its starring role in the Republic of Texas era.

Enhance the partnership with Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) to support road projects in the state park system.

TPWD currently partners with another major state agency, TxDOT, to complete public road works projects in state parks in a much more efficient manner. This growing partnership will allow for Texans to take advantage of economy of scale opportunities by having agencies focus on completing work that is within their core competencies. TxDOT is already mobilized statewide to perform road and bridge work, and can more efficiently manage these capital projects within the state park system. Increasing this partnership will allow TPWD to more effectively manage its capital funds focused on park facilities and infrastructure, amenities, visitor services, and resource stewardship.

STRENGTHEN STEWARDSHIP

Enhance management capabilities for the natural and cultural resources that are the essence of state parks to protect these attributes in a changing world.

The conservation of natural and cultural resources are a primary basis for the state park system. In order to conserve these resources for the enjoyment and enlightenment of future generations it will be necessary to invest in professional research and active management. The coming years will see increasing impacts to parks from encroaching development, invasive species introduction and high visitor use. Addressing these issues will require science based, active management to maintain outstanding examples of the historic and natural landscape of Texas.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS:

Pursue a robust program of natural resource restoration projects.

Parks are often acquired to preserve outstanding examples of natural ecotypes, but it is also desirable to restore landscapes to historical conditions. These projects range from grassland restorations and management through the use of prescribed fire to the restoration of Bastrop State Park, where more than one million pine seedlings have been planted to recreate the forest lost to wildfire in 2011.

Case Study: Restoration of marshes at San Jacinto Battleground SHS

The San Jacinto Battleground State Historic Site, location of the decisive battle of April 1836 where Texas won independence from Mexico has changed significantly since that fateful day. The battleground is now surrounded by industrial development, and Buffalo Bayou has been transformed into one of the largest ports in the world, but none of these alterations have been more pervasive than the subsidence of the landscape where the battle occurred. Beginning in the 1940s and accelerating through the 1960s and 70s,



the land slowly settled and dropped about ten feet. Today the level of Galveston Bay adjacent to the battleground lies between the 9 and 12-foot elevation contours shown on a survey map produced by the Army Corps of Engineers in 1913. This has led to a drastic change in the appearance of the battlefield, flooding parts of previously dry land, and changing what were tidal marshes at the time of the battle into shallow lakes. With these changes, it is difficult to visualize the flow of the battle and understand how the events of April 21, 1836 occurred.

MANAGE RESOURCES

Case study, continued

Beginning in the 1990s, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department began a series of restoration projects to restore the landscape of San Jacinto to a state closer to its appearance of 1836. Upland areas of the battlefield are being restored to their historic tallgrass prairie, and significant research was conducted to identify the original land surfaces and determine areas that should be restored to marsh.

A current phase of the project extends the ongoing marsh restoration efforts to a portion of the site known as Boggy Bayou. This area was originally a small bayou with a large fringe of marsh along its banks. By the 1960's it was completely submerged below sea level, creating an open water lake that had replaced the bayou and adjacent marsh existing at the time of the battle. The Boggy Bayou restoration will recreate approximately 101 acres of marsh, resulting in a scene similar to the landscape of 1836.

To begin the restoration, levees were installed around the perimeter of the restoration area to contain dredge material from an industrial development project pumped to the site and dispersed over the area. The deposited material will raise the marsh, allowing marsh grasses to expand their coverage over the area. As the marsh recovers, Boggy Bayou will return to the shallow stream with a wide fringe of marsh that played such an essential role in the battle for Texas Independence. The newly restored marsh will also provide increased habitat for birds, small mammals and marine species such as shrimp larvae and crabs when the project is complete, reversing some of the effects of industrial development in the area. The restored area will more closely resemble the appearance of the battleground in 1836, allowing a better understanding of the constraints faced by the opposing forces during the conflict and the melee afterward as the routed Mexican forces attempted to flee from the Texan army.

Preserve dark skies in parks.

The night sky has informed and inspired humankind for thousands of years. As parks are increasingly surrounded by development, it is more important than ever for parks to reduce or eliminate the effects of light pollution by adopting standards to lessen or eliminate sources of unnecessary or ill-used light in parks. Shielded fixtures and lower light levels can actually improve safety and visibility for park users, while lessening the effects of unneeded light on wildlife and improve energy efficiency. State Park management will conduct light audits of parks and will ensure that park construction and maintenance projects preserve night skies.



Use the best available science to guide decision making.

A strong resource management program must be guided by knowledge and scientific methods. The park system will maintain an active program to monitor plant and animal community populations and conduct cultural resource site monitoring to ensure resources are protected.

Case Study: Hueco Tanks State Park and Historic Site

Perhaps no other site in the state park system exemplifies the connections between natural resources and human history, or the challenges facing State Parks management than Hueco Tanks.



Throughout the last 10,000 years, Hueco Tanks has provided water, food and shelter to travelers in the Chihuahuan Desert. People left clues to their stories in the pictographs and petroglyphs found here. Their imagery of animals, birds and large-eyed figures may represent rain or storm deities. The most renowned images are “masks” or face designs. Hueco Tanks has the largest grouping of such masks in North America, along with handprints and images of dancing figures, horses, weapons and humans in European clothing. The Kiowa, Mescalero Apache, Comanche, Tigua and the people of Isleta del Norte Pueblo all consider the site to be a meaningful part of their heritage.

Today, access to the park's 860 acres is strictly managed to protect its resources. Because of its world-renowned body of rock images, the park is designated as a State Archeological Landmark and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

In addition to the world class cultural resources the site is also a sanctuary for numerous rare plant and animal species, preserving natural communities that are increasingly threatened by the growth of the El Paso metropolitan area. Additionally, Hueco Tanks is known worldwide for its unparalleled rock climbing opportunities drawing enthusiasts to the craggy and unusual formations. Finally, Hueco Tanks offers a nearby escape to area residents simply seeking a place of respite for family gatherings. Ensuring the protection of the site's irreplaceable resources while accommodating responsible public use can only be accomplished through science based management that engages users in support of resource protection goals. While use restrictions have sometimes been controversial, all parties agree on the need to ensure Hueco Tanks is preserved for future generations to experience.



Identifying the Irreplaceable

Inventory of cultural resources at the site has long been a priority for the agency, and management has devoted considerable efforts to documentation of the resources at Hueco Tanks. Past projects include a comprehensive ground survey for archeological deposits around the base of the mountains by the TPWD Archeology Survey Team in 1999 and 2001, and a large rock art inventory in 1999 and 2000. The results of the rock art inventory, which incorporated the findings of several previous investigations at Hueco Tanks, helped determine where climbing activities could occur at the park without impacting identified rock imagery.

Today, a new image enhancement program called DStretch is being used in a new Hueco Tanks survey project. Adapting technology used by NASA for analyzing aerial photographs, the technology greatly improves on previous techniques for detecting faint pictographs that may be nearly impossible to detect with the unaided eye. Recent use of DStretch at Hueco Tanks has already led to the discovery of previously unknown rock imagery at the site.

The findings will be used to help monitor any newly discovered rock imagery and help manage activities that have the potential to impact these resources. The new survey and use of the DStretch technology will provide TPWD a definitive accounting of any previously unidentified rock art in conjunction with climbing routes in the park. As a result, park visitors can utilize the park without harming the cultural resources of this unique site.

MODERNIZE

Modernize business systems and management practices to ensure parks are operated efficiently and can creatively respond to opportunities.

The state park system will utilize changes in technology to improve customer service and operational efficiencies. From enhanced interpretive methods to more efficient reservation and check-in systems, technological developments will change the park experience in the future.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS:

Modernize amenities and services of state parks, historic sites and natural areas.

Develop site-based actions plans for each state park unit that identifies amenity and service priorities that will improve the ability of each site to meet the needs and interests of current and future users for the second century of the park system. These plans will include facility development and improvements, interpretive programming and customer service expansions.

Modernize business systems and park operations

TPWD is currently in the process of replacing its aging business system which incorporates park reservations, revenue processing and other accounting tasks with a new software package. This necessary upgrade will provide better fiscal accountability and user data, however, the business technology landscape is rapidly evolving and it is imperative that the agency be able to adapt in a timely fashion in order to meet customer demands. Services such as “pay by phone” capabilities are becoming the norm, and will require the park system to make additional investments in order to keep pace.



PURSUE OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Undertake the strategic decisions necessary to guide the system on a path to operational excellence through the implementation of performance standards, best business practices, and continual review and assessment of the system inventory.

Much like the scientific methodology utilized to maintain the natural and cultural resources of parks, park management will insure that best management practices are utilized to guide the operational decisions of the park system. Adopting a system of performance standards and business practices can guide management and provide accountability to state leadership.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS:

Implement regular evaluation of operational effectiveness through standard metrics and performance measures.

Each state park site will be evaluated regularly by multiple performance measures. The park system can grow to adopt these performance measures over time. These may include the following:

- Capacity management by amenity.
- Cost center goals for efficiency and revenue development.
- Customer satisfaction.
- Retention of the core market measured by return visitation.
- Each state park should maximize the number of partnerships in place that help them to manage the resources and provide services in the state park.
- Each state park is committed to promoting the state park in the region and the state.
- Equipment replacement in set on a schedule and is met at 95% level on a yearly basis.

Exemplify business sustainability best practices and retain a strong vision for the future.

The state park system should be a leader in implementing environmentally sustainable systems, as well as innovatively meeting public needs and expectations. There is a need to invest in new sites to meet increased demand from a growing population, otherwise the overall quality of the state park experience will be diminished. Texas has a unified system that recognizes and stewards the intersection of natural, historic and cultural resources. Texas Parks and Wildlife Department is well tooled and most competent in managing our state's important natural areas and historic sites in an efficient and sustainable manner that exemplifies the best practices of resource stewardship, public service, and entrepreneurialism.

Maintain an ongoing evaluation of divestiture and realignment opportunities.

It is a best practice of public park systems to have well defined standards which can guide consideration for potential divestiture or realignment. The following are recommended guidelines for the Texas State Park System in this type of evaluation:

- State parks that are owned by federal or local governmental entities that could operate the site with significant cost avoidance for the State.
- State park sites that feature amenities more closely aligned with community parks and that can be more efficiently and effectively managed by another public entity while preserving the quality of the resource and the visitor experience.
- State Park system sites should not be transferred to another state agency unless there is an overall cost saving to the state, strong support from local and affected constituencies for such a transfer, and demonstrable evidence that another entity may serve as a better steward of said site in the long term.

The Next 100 Years:

A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

The second century of Texas State Parks can build upon the foundation laid in 1923 and reinforced with the dedication of sporting goods sales tax revenue in 2015 to provide conservation, public health and economic benefits for all Texans. With the ability to initiate and act on long term plans, the state park system will continue its inspiring and compelling mission and will meet the needs of an ever-changing Texas. With the commitment from state leadership and the enthusiastic support of Texas citizens, the system can continue its history of service for the 21st century and beyond.

In its second century the state park system will be a place where Texans new and old can see the pathways that lead to the modern Texas through a robust collection of historic sites marking the progress of time and our society, which also show the interconnections and interdependence of man and his environment. The system will engage all residents to make them aware of the resources and recreational opportunities to be found in parks, and the benefits to be gained from state park experiences. This can be accomplished through a greater presence in metropolitan urban settings to provide initial experiences and exposure to the natural, cultural and historical resources of the state. These efforts will also include more robust partnerships with local parks departments and various community organizations, and strategically target outreach efforts and programmatic services to engage underrepresented audiences.

Sustained investment will yield a system of well-maintained sites that are safe for visitors and operated by a professional staff providing efficient and courteous services, operating according to high level standards. Law enforcement, interpretation / education programming, resource management, facility maintenance, business services, wildland firefighting, and emergency response skill sets are just a few of the competencies that TPWD maintains amongst its staff. These dedicated state employees will be a workforce that is culturally competent, informed, well trained, and properly focused on service delivery in an increasingly diverse state population.

A strong program of active resource management will conserve examples of Texas as it existed in pre-settlement conditions, providing refuge and habitat for the native plants and animals that also call Texas home. Landmarks of the Texas story and the places holding the secrets of the past will be preserved for future generations to learn from and to pay their respects to those that have paved the way for the state we enjoy today.

It will be a system that uses technology to provide efficiency and excellent customer service in its business transactions, and is transparent and accountable in managing financial resources. Appropriate business opportunities will be engaged through partnerships with the private and nonprofit sectors, operating in an atmosphere of innovation and creativity to develop concession contracts, guide services and visitor services. Partnerships can also provide opportunities to leverage public investments, broaden visitor experiences, develop/construct infrastructure, and capitalize on constantly evolving business opportunities in parks.

Park leadership must continue to provide vision and guidance to a system that will continue to evolve and progress, adjusting its inventory to best fulfill the mission of the agency. Operational excellence will be ensured through the implementation of performance standards and the adoption of high business practice standards. As the park system enters its second century, TPWD will develop infrastructure that is smartly meeting the needs of today and future park users, and considerate of visitors yet to be engaged. In doing so, the park system will create and maintain user environments with great consideration given to infrastructure longevity, sustainability, cost effectiveness, and with good financial return to the State of Texas.



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